



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Nemtsov and Yashin Sentencing

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 27, 2011

In recent months, we were pleased that Moscow authorities had reversed their previous policy and decided to allow citizens to exercise their constitutional right to peaceful assembly on the 31st of every month with 31 days.

U.S. officials in Moscow and St. Petersburg confirm that several gatherings took place on December 31 in both cities to demonstrate support for Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of assembly. Dozens of people were arrested in both cities, including opposition politicians Boris Nemtsov, Eduard Limonov, and Ilya Yashin, who were sentenced to 15, 15, and 5 days in prison, respectively, for exercising their constitutional rights. Dozens of others who conducted solitary protests in solidarity with those arrested were themselves detained in the following days.

The United States reiterates the importance of embracing and protecting universal values, including freedoms of expression and assembly, enshrined in the Russian Constitution, in OSCE commitments, as well as in international agreements which Russia has signed.

The United States will continue to be frank in voicing concerns about the human rights situation in all OSCE participating States. Russia, the United States, and all other participating States of the OSCE have "categorically and irrevocably" reaffirmed, as recently as the Astana Summit, that "the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.